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ART OR ARTEFACT: IS THAT THE QUESTION?
"Pasifika styles" at the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and the refurbishment of the Michael Rockefeller Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art*

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Basing my analysis on two exhibition projects in which I participated – "Pasifika styles" at the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA), and the refurbishment of the Michael Rockefeller Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art – I demonstrate that these two projects challenged the distinction that is often made between 'art' and 'artefact'. I further argue that the context into which the things – to use a more inclusive and neutral term (Henare, Holbraad and Wastell 2007) – are placed influences both the organisation and the final outcome of exhibition projects. In so doing, I concur with one of Nicholas Thomas' central ideas in "Entangled objects" that 'objects are not what they were made to be, but what they have become' (1991:4). Following this line of thought, the distinction between art and artefact might not be a useful working category. Acknowledging, however, the classification of museums into art and anthropology museums can be a good starting point to see how museums deal with exhibition projects and their objects. It will appear that using the metaphor of Pacific sailing is applicable. Museums do not navigate, i.e. they do not use or apply scientific instruments or specific mechanical systems. Museums practice the interpretative craft that is 'wayfinding' in the sense explained by Greg Dening: '"Way-finding" is the the [sic] word that modern islanders use to describe their craft and the craft of their ancestors in piloting their voyaging canoes around the Great Ocean, the Pacific' (2004:167). Wayfinding thus implies a reliance on what happened before – the museum's institutional histories – while at the same time dealing with relevant contemporary issues.

Art versus artefact

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, objects originating from the Pacific – and objects of the cultural 'Other', for that matter (Phillips and Steiner 1999:3) – have been categorised into two groups: 'art' and 'artefact', which correspond to 'art history' and

* The article is based on a conference paper presented during the working session entitled "Ethnographic museums at the beginning of the twenty-first century: stakes and challenges" at the 2008 European Society for Oceanists (ESfO) Symposium in Verona. The aim of the panel was to explore the present-day role of ethnographic museums and to consider how to go beyond the colonial heritage.

'anthropology' respectively, academic disciplines which were formally developed in the late nineteenth century. This binary division has always revealed some tension which, according to Ruth Phillips and Christopher Steiner, has led the dualistic art/artefact distinction being seen as a given in academic literature (1999:5). Instead of questioning this, the focus was placed on the 'ambiguities and inadequacies' linked to the division (Phillips and Steiner 1999:5). However, Steven Hooper (2008), discussing his Musée du Quai Branly temporary show "Polynésie: arts et divinités", during the symposium "Exhibiting Polynesia: past, present and future", brought up the question of whether it was an art exhibition or an anthropological one. It is certainly no coincidence that this question was brought up at the Musée du Quai Branly, an institution which has struggled to define itself since its conception. Was it to become an art museum or an ethnographic museum? Even finding a title for the new museum posed problems, when finally, to avoid further uncertainty, the complex was named after the address it occupies in the Parisian landscape (Price 2007:42–47). Hooper, however, is adamant that art or artefact is n o t the question; the distinction between an art exhibition and an anthropological exhibition is not a useful one to make (2006:28). It can, moreover, be extremely challenging, as the very question of the difference between an aesthetically pleasing art object and a functional artefact presupposes that there are some qualities inherent in the groups of objects that enable us to distinguish easily art from artefact (Schaeffer 2004:25–26). This leads to the obvious question of how to identify those qualities. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill eludes this conundrum in a way by stating that individual objects are in fact polysemic, thus having multiple meanings and capable of being placed in many different groupings (2000:77). The inseparability of art and artefact is also stressed by Hooper when he asserts that although so-called 'ethnographic objects' are made to do a job, they are at the same time art (2006:28). Depending on their temporal and geographical contexts, objects offer, through their materiality, access to and are witness to a world of emotions, thoughts and sensory experiences. Objects may evoke knowledge, power, wealth, curiosity, awe, fear, and admiration or a combination of these. In short, this follows Alfred Gell's (1998) idea that art in its widest sense – it does not necessarily need to be aesthetically pleasing, or symbolise something – is intended to have an effect on its social milieu.

Art museum versus ethnographic museum

The first project up for discussion is entitled "Pasifika styles", exhibited at the MAA. The second case study I consider is the reinstallation of the Rockefeller wing dedicated to the Arts of Oceania at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

As a curatorial assistant at the MAA (February 2006–August 2006) I was actively involved for seven months in the exhibition project "Pasifika styles". From September

2006 until August 2007 I held a Sylvan C. Coleman and Pamela Coleman Memorial Fund Fellowship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. My position there continued as a research associate from October 2007 until December 2007, and I participated in the reinstallation project for a total of six months.

I should point out that I had slightly different roles in relation to the two projects. In Cambridge, I organised and facilitated the research visits of New Zealand and Pacific Island artists, participating in the "Pasifika styles" exhibition project. In particular, I assisted the artists' research on the historical collections that related to them or to where their parents had been born. Direct contact with the objects was at the heart of their research – once the object's origin had been established – as they focused on materials, techniques, and both old and contemporary meanings. In New York I was a research associate working on the final corrections of the catalogue, the writing of labels, correcting of maps and compiling invitation lists, as well as the final installation of both objects and labels.

The two sites have been singled out because I carried out curatorial or research functions in both museums. Moreover, these renowned institutions have major Pacific collections and were at the time developing important Pacific exhibitions projects.[1] As a participant observer, I became acutely aware of the respective museums' very different approaches and challenges at stake. This prompted me to examine how far the type of museum influences the nature of the exhibitions that it organises. As Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss argue in "Primitive classification" (1963), the task of the ethnographer is to discover the classifications people make, as they form the basis of fundamental cultural practices. Durkheim and Mauss see classification as a process of demarcating things that are related and thus differentiating them. As with the art/artefact distinction, Western society has made a seemingly clear-cut distinction between the museums I am discussing here: the Cambridge Museum is a museum of anthropology (and archaeology, though I am not going to elaborate on the archaeology section of the museum, as "Pasifika styles" was essentially organised by its anthropology department), while the Metropolitan Museum portrays itself as an encyclopaedic art museum. Consequently, the Cambridge Museum as an anthropology museum is supposed to work with 'artefacts' and produce anthropological or ethnographic exhibitions while the Metropolitan Museum holds art exhibitions, with, of course, art objects. While I have asserted that treating objects as art or artefact was not necessarily a guiding element in either of the two exhibition projects, I do argue that the classificatory distinction in Western society between the 'art museum' and the 'ethnographic museum' did influence the exhibitions held within the respective institutions. It is now widely accepted that, once in museums, things do not have a stable and fixed role, but on the contrary a multitude of roles. Moreover, the same object can fulfil a different task depending on the type of museum

1 "Pasifika styles" was on show from May 2006 until February 2008; the Rockefeller Wing opened in November 2007.

in which it 'works' or has its agency felt. My viewpoint is thus that it is not so much the type of object that is displayed – ethnographic or art – but the context – ethnographic versus art museum – in which the objects are presented that determines the shaping of the exhibition project. In fact, exhibitions mirror and reflect their institution's histories.

A SHORT INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY

After identifying the historical context in which the museums were created, I portray the nature of the projects, their realisation and then finally the end result. Both museums were founded during the second half of the nineteenth century, with the Metropolitan Museum being established in 1870 and the MAA in 1884.

The MAA

The MAA actually first housed 'general and local archaeology' in Little St. Mary's Lane, behind Peterhouse College (Gathercole 1980:13). At that time the collections included the holdings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, which had begun to assemble local antiquities from 1839, as well as Polynesian material donated by Alfred Maudslay and Sir Arthur Gordon after they had returned from holding colonial posts in Fiji. Baron Anatole von Hügel became the first curator, and he donated his own collections of ethnographic objects from the South Pacific.

Since the museum's collections were rapidly expanding, a new location had to be sought. Baron Anatole von Hügel managed to raise the necessary funds, and the foundation stone of the present building was laid by his wife in 1910. By 1913 the building was complete enough to have the collections moved into it. Between 1912 and 1927, objects collected during the three eighteenth-century voyages of Captain Cook entered the museum through various deposits and donations. These objects, as explained later, played an important role during the "Pasifika styles" exhibition project.

The Torres Strait expedition of 1898 was instrumental in the development of the museum and of anthropology as a discipline in general (Herle and Philp 1998), but it also laid the foundations that would allow a project such as "Pasifika styles" to develop. In March 1898 a team of seven men led by the natural scientist and ethnologist Alfred Haddon, and including scholars in the fields of psychology, physiology, medicine and linguistics, set out for the Torres Strait Islands of Australia, situated between northern Queensland and Papua New Guinea. They were sponsored by the University of Cambridge and aimed at a comprehensive anthropological study of the inhabitants. The research had a major influence on the professionalisation of social anthropology in Cambridge and beyond, and marked an important turning point in experimental

psychology. Thus, as Herle and Philp state: 'The Expedition and its results are an important part of several distinct yet intersecting histories' (1998:8). The objects collected and other documentation generated by the encounter between the expedition members and the Torres Strait Islanders remain an important source of information for researchers today, and are of significance to families and descendants of individual islanders who developed personal relationships with the expedition members (Herle and Philp 1998:52–55). It still informs the history of the MAA as an institution today.

Haddon, leader of the 1898 Torres Strait exhibition, assumed the role of deputy curator when von Hügel became ill. Haddon and his colleague William Rivers encouraged many of their students, such as Alfred Radcliffe Brown, Gunnar Landtman, John Layard, Bernard Deacon[2] and Gregory Bateson, to collect for the museum. The active collecting process thus saw its foundation in the early twentieth century and continues up till now. "Pasifika styles" had a collection component to it. Louis Clarke succeeded von Hügel in 1922 and like the latter was a major benefactor of the museum. Under Clarke's tenure both archaeological and anthropological collections were acquired, mainly through Cambridge-based scholars. Thomas Paterson, an Arctic scholar, took up the curatorship in 1937 and was replaced by Geoffrey Bushnell in 1948 from whom Pacific archaeologist and anthropologist Peter Gathercole took over later the same year. Professor David Phillipson, an African archaeologist was curator and director from 1984 to 2006, when the position was taken over by Nicholas Thomas.

This brief historical overview of the MAA demonstrates how it grew to be an institution with close links to the university's anthropology department, shaping and influencing its present-day form. Moreover, the anthropology section of the museum also holds very important historical collections, mainly from Cook's and Vancouver's eighteenth-century voyages, and the museum continues its collecting programme.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded in 1870 as a partnership between city government and a private board of trustees (Hibbard 1980:7–27). The purposes of the Metropolitan Museum were clear from the start: it was to gather a more or less complete collection of objects to illustrate all branches of art history, from the earliest beginnings to present times. It had to serve for the instruction and entertainment of the people while at the same time providing students and artisans with examples of what had been produced in the past so that they could imitate and improve on them (Alexander 1979:31–32). It was thus effectively to become an encyclopaedic art museum based

2 Deacon did field research in Vanuatu, but died tragically in the field (Urry 1998:229–230).

very much on the principles of eighteenth-century encyclopaedists such as Diderot and d'Alembert.[3]

In 1978 the collection from the Museum of Primitive Art in New York, which had closed its doors in 1975, was legally transferred to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Museum of Primitive Art, described by Eric Kjellgren (2007a) as one of the 'earliest and most influential institutions to champion the appreciation of works of art from Africa, Oceania and pre-Columbian America', had been founded in 1954 by Nelson A. Rockefeller in association with René d'Harnoncourt. It opened to the public in 1957. In 1979, the now Metropolitan Museum of Art collections were significantly augmented by the bequest of additional works from the collection of Nelson Rockefeller, which, together with the objects transferred the previous year, comprise the Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection. The Michael C. Rockefeller Wing finally opened to the public in 1982.

The focus of the Metropolitan Museum in general has always been on art in all its diversity. This in a way 'justified' the transfer of objects from the Museum of Primitive Art to the Metropolitan Museum. However, this justification was probably not necessary, as the Museum of Primitive Art had opened in 1957 with an aesthetic focus on objects, as was obvious from Nelson Rockefeller's statement at the opening:

> Museums of ethnology and 'natural history' have, of course, long shown these arts [...] They have done so primarily to document their studies of indigenous cultures. It is our purpose to supplement their achievement. However, we do not wish to establish primitive art as a separate kind of category, but rather wish to integrate it, with all its amazing variety, into what is already known of the arts of man. Our aim will always be to select objects of outstanding beauty whose rare quality is the equal of works shown in other museums of art throughout the world, and to exhibit them so that everyone can enjoy them in the fullest measure (quoted in Kjellgren 2007b:18).

Cambridge "Pasifika styles" exhibition project

I became involved in the "Pasifika styles" exhibition project in November 2005, when the curators Amiria Salmond and Rosanna Raymond secured major funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. I first started attending the meetings, for which I took the minutes. My involvement and responsibilities increased when I became curatorial assistant in February 2006. "Pasifika styles" was a two-year exhibition project (May 2006 to February 2008) that showcased contemporary art from New Zealand-based

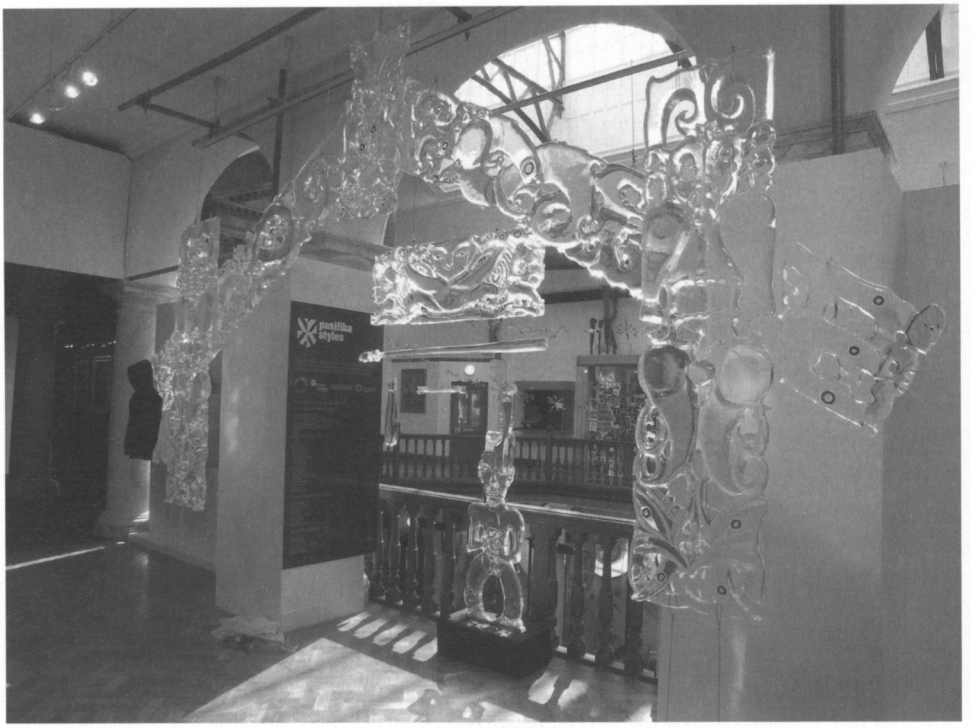
[3] Meijers (2005:174); de Montebello, cited in Price (2007:43, 196)

Maori and Pacific islands artists.[4] The exhibition space was organised into different zones such as 'the street' and 'the living room'. Artists worked in a variety of materials and media, including video installations, carvings, collages, woven works, prints, fashion and photographs. Most artists were connected in some way either with museums in general or very specifically with the Cambridge Museum. Anita Herle, curator at the museum, gives an overview of the exhibition in her article "Relational understandings: connecting people and things through Pasifika styles" (2008). It is not my intention to repeat what she says here, since I prefer to concentrate on those pieces that were the result of the artists' direct engagement with the MAA. The first exhibit the visitor was welcomed with was George Nuku's "Outer space marae", carved from acrylic perspex and inlaid with Haliotis shell (*paua*). Most parts of the gallery were visible through the *marae*,[5] such as Rosanna Raymond's "Eyeland part II: welkom 2 da k'lub", in which she used a few clubs which were related to her cultural background, a pandanus mat and a raffia skirt from the museum together with photographs, posters, magazine covers and objects, effectively making a collage (Moutu 2007). Her personal items had been collected since the 1990s to document the emerging Pasifika art movement in New Zealand (Durand 2008:78–79). She thus visualised the relationships between Auckland-based Maori and Pacific Islander artist communities and the museum community. Lisa Reihana also included museum objects in a very visible way in her installation "He tautoko", as it featured a carved wooden ancestral figure that had originally been attached to a house gable. Reihana also addressed a historical encounter in 1820 between Hongi Hika (1772?–1828), a Maori chief and war leader of the Ngapuhi tribe, and Professor Samuel Lee, a linguist at Queens College, Cambridge. Hongi Hika's contribution to Lee's work on the first orthography of the Maori language was never formally acknowledged. Other artists engaged with the museum's historical collections in less obvious ways. Wayne Youle used in his installation museum boxes that housed Maori treasures (*taonga*). Chris Charteris installed some of his pendants and necklaces in the midst of historical cases with Fijian whale ivory and shell ornaments. Some works of the featured artists were bought and are now in the museum's permanent collection.

The "Pasifika styles" exhibition project should be seen in the context of the museum's important position in anthropological thinking, its historical collections and its continuing collecting programme. As Rosanna Raymond and Amiria Salmond state in the introduction to the "Pasifika styles" catalogue: 'One of the main objectives of Pasifika Styles from the institutional side was to literally enliven the Museum, demonstrating the present-day relevance of its collections by inviting to Cambridge some of the people to whom they are most important' (2008:3). Collaborative projects involving museums

4 Francis Upritchard and Reuben Paterson were not based in New Zealand at that time. "Pasifika Styles" thus aimed at demonstrating the far-reaching influence of the Pasifika art movement (see Brown 2008).

5 *Marae* in New Zealand Maori is the open space on which the meeting house can be found.



Overview "Pasifika styles" exhibition with on the foreground "Outer space marae" by George Nuku, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge (May 2006; photo: Carine Durand)

and artists are increasingly widespread (Durand 2010). However, "Pasifika styles" was innovative in the way it relied on the active involvement of the artists.[6] From the beginning of the project, the artists helped shape it, establishing objectives. It was very clear that despite, or maybe because of the museum's important historical collections, no one involved in the project wanted it to be only about the past: it was about the past, the present and the future. The idea of connecting the past to the future is evident from some statements made by the artists. Rosanna Raymond says: 'Through the *taonga*, the past became present and I felt connected to my people once more as they inspired me to

6 As Anita Herle (1994) explains, precedents for this boundary crossing existed through MAA's collaboration with Yarjung Kromchhain Tamu (Gurung), a practising Pachyu shaman from Nepal, whom the museum commissioned to make a collection of Tamu shamanistic material. He also assisted museum staff in devising appropriate storage arrangements and curating a temporary exhibition. In 1998, an exhibition was organised in close collaboration with Torres Strait Islander scholars and artists to commemorate the 1898 Cambridge University Expedition to the Torres Strait (Herle 2003). These projects have enabled museum staff and specific communities to share the custody and interpretations of the museum's collections.

keep creating and producing new works' (Raymond and Salmond 2008:9). Chris Charteris in his turn states: 'When I go and see those collections you know you're kind of looking at your future as well as the past' (Raymond and Salmond 2008:9).

Bringing into the museum people whose objects are presented there is illuminating. In so doing, "Pasifika styles" tried to transcend the division between Pacific art and Pacific anthropology, which was seen not so much as a tension between art and artefact, but more as the division between artistic practice and scholarly or academic commentary. From the beginning of and during the project, there were serious reservations and concerns about holding an exhibition of contemporary art in an anthropology museum. The concerns came from both the curators and the artists: what was contemporary art doing in an anthropology museum? Similarly, would displaying contemporary art in an anthropology museum give the objects a different classification, turning them into contemporary Pacific artefacts (Elliott 2008:94)? Curators wanted the exhibition to provoke a different way of viewing the anthropology museum by offering a window on the cultural dynamics and continuities of Pacific indigenous peoples through the display of contemporary indigenous art. By making the museum a forum where different voices could be heard, the curators hoped to assert the present-day importance of the museum and encourage reflections on its relevance and meaning today. The artists, on the other hand, wanted to be recognised as artists in their own right, while at the same time displaying their rootedness in their Pacific cultures. However, the artists, being used to having shows in galleries, feared that exhibiting in an anthropology museum would lead to their works being viewed as 'specimens' representing 'traditional' Pacific cultures. The artists wanted the public to acknowledge the complexities attached to the idea of 'traditional' and 'contemporary' things and to explore the notion of continuity.[7]

Metropolitan Rockefeller Wing exhibition project

The Rockefeller Wing reinstallation was an extensive three-year renovation project which included the redisplay of over 400 objects from Melanesia, Polynesia, Micronesia and Island South East Asia, as well as the reorganisation of the storage area, the conservation of objects and some building work. It seems to me that the history of the department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas as part of the Metropolitan Museum is instrumental in understanding the project. As the former director, Philippe de Montebello, clearly states in the catalogue's introduction: 'Its galleries, devoted to the display of the arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, are central to the Metropolitan's mission, as an encyclopaedic museum, to present the full scope and richness

7 These concerns were voiced informally during meetings, discussions and conversations with the curators and artists at different stages preceding the exhibition.

of human artistic achievement within a single institution' (de Montebello 2007:vi). 'Art' was only used from the beginning of the twentieth century to designate the objects from Oceania, which were then admitted into the canon of art as *art primitif*. Artists such as Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse and Henry Moore greatly admired art from Oceania. Many of the German expressionists included Oceanic imagery in their artistic vocabulary (Kjellgren 2007b:18). Through the choice of objects, which do not include any used in a day-to-day context, the Metropolitan Museum helps consolidate the aestheticisation of ethnographic artefacts. A side-effect of stressing the 'beauty' of things, at the risk of decontextualising them, is that the objects loose their temporal anchoring to become part of a 'timeless' ethnographic present.

The Michael C. Rockefeller Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art officially reopened on Friday 14 November 2007. Objects from different parts of Oceania are shown in the redesigned first floor galleries, which are accessible from the Modern Art wing in the west, the Greek and Roman Art wing in the east and the African art wing in the north. These entrances are marked by introductory text panels on Oceania. The display of the objects is arranged geographically or according to cultural groups. This layout complies with exhibition schemes developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There were two models: General Pitt Rivers, the benefactor of the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, developed an organisation by typology, while Franz Boas, curator at the American Museum of Natural History, advocated geographical or cultural groupings. The representation of Australia is rather different from the other regions. In an attempt to prick the timelessness of the exhibition, the curator Eric Kjellgren decided to include in the Australia display both 'traditional' historical objects and contemporary paintings. This more encompassing approach probably also resulted from Kjellgren's research field, which is Australia and more particularly art from the Kimberly region. Some of the most impressive New Guinea pieces include Asmat *bis* poles that were collected during the Michael Rockefeller Expedition of 1961 and formed part of the initial Nelson A. Rockefeller Museum collection that was housed in the Museum of Primitive Art, founded in 1955. Their display conveys an aesthetically pleasing effect to the large room. The Kwoma ceiling, made of more than two hundred painted sago palm spathes, is now installed in full in the central part of the exhibition space and makes for an awe-inspiring experience. These paintings, which traditionally adorned the inside of ceremonial men's houses, were commissioned specially by former Oceania curator Douglas Newton to be displayed in the Metropolitan Museum. The conservators, who worked on cleaning and then finally installing the separate panels of the ceiling, told me they not only wanted to make a beautiful display but also insisted on taking into account Douglas Newton's field notes about the proper arrangement of the panels. They welcomed Christian Kaufmann's valuable input, which resulted from in-depth research on the Kwoma ceiling. A slit gong from northern Vanuatu is one of the most prominent pieces in the Island Melanesia section.

Overview of the reinstallation of the Oceania gallery at the Rockefeller Wing, Metropolitan Museum of Art (November 2007; photo: Fanny Wonu Yeys)

The above-mentioned freestanding objects were installed first, starting with the Kwoma ceiling and followed by the Asmat *bis* poles, and other large objects such as canoes and drums. A specialist team of riggers worked in close collaboration with the museum conservators.

Smaller compartmentalised sections are dedicated to the arts of Polynesia, Micronesia and Island Southeast Asia. A number of Polynesian objects were received on long-term loan from other museums. For the first time, one case is dedicated to the display of Polynesian bark cloth, thus contrasting and complementing the objects made out of hard materials such as wood and bone and representing an important aspect of women's art. As textiles are sensitive to light, this display will rotate. The bark cloth case is an example of thematic organisation, which nonetheless does not transgress the geographical ordering of the whole. One case in the Polynesian section displays Micronesian objects, including a gable figure, a mask, a navigational 'stick chart' and several ceremonial household implements such as bowls and food pounders.

The Island Southeast Asia subdivision covers objects made and used by indigenous peoples living in Taiwan, Borneo, the Philippines and Indonesia. There is a wide

variety of materials ranging from the *ikat* textiles from Sumatra (Indonesia) to gold jewellery from Indonesia and the Philippines, wooden masks from Borneo, paper divination books from the Batak in Sumatra and wooden architectural sculpture carved by the Paiwan, one of the indigenous peoples of Taiwan.

All the objects on display are accompanied by labels giving the name of the object, if possible also in the vernacular language, materials, dates, and the collector. Many items have more extensive information, elaborating on their iconography, use, and significance. Each of the six areas – Australia, New Guinea, Island Melanesia, Polynesia, Micronesia and Island Southeast Asia – is introduced by general information panels, which are accompanied by detailed maps indicating all the islands from which the objects originate.

For the first time, a catalogue written by the Oceania curator Eric Kjellgren and discussing a selection of the Metropolitan Museum's Oceanic collection was produced to accompany the opening of the renewed gallery.

At the Metropolitan Museum, the Rockefeller Wing project was 'justified' by stressing the aesthetics – the assessment of beauty, taste and form, skill and manufacture – of the arts of Oceania. However, through discussions, the curatorial team expressed awareness of the tension that existed throughout the project between the focus on art and the fact that one was actually dealing with ethnographic objects, and therefore artefacts. A display of beautiful objects from the past tends to create a feeling that these works were made by cultures that are now dead. The main curator of the project, Eric Kjellgren, feared that the aesthetic focus might alienate the objects from their contexts. He tried to remedy what was felt to be a partial vision of Oceanic art by writing extensive labels that contextualise the artworks where possible using contemporary photographs to show the public that many objects still have a contemporary significance.

Conclusion

Art or artefact? – While it may not be useful to get bogged down in terminology (Elliott 2008:95), classificatory elements predispose the way in which institutions negotiate the tensions they feel to be present in the exhibitions. The MAA has opted for a radical 'anthropological' approach to contemporary art from the Pacific, which, according to Hooper (2008), can be encapsulated in two concepts: 'pathways' and 'foundation'. Pathways were built: "Pasifika styles" was about creating relationships between people within the institution and the region, the university community and the artists, between the institution and other art galleries. The project also challenged expectations that often see museums as places in which you are only confronted with objects and demonstrated that museums are also about people. The exhibition drew on historical founda-

tions, that is, the museum's historical collections and the personal histories of the artists, but also its institutional history, pushing boundaries and moving artworks and people forward. These proceedings fell completely within the role and function of the museum as a university institution, a place where new ideas can be developed and put on display. Just as, in 1898, the Cambridge Expedition to the Torres Strait laid the foundations for the development of anthropology as a modern, field-based discipline, "Pasifika styles", though much smaller in scope, probably contributed to thinking on contemporary issues in museum anthropology.

Rosanna Raymond feels that the aesthetic value of objects when displayed in a fine art museum can prevent those objects from showing their full potential (Raymond quoted in Raymond and Salmond 2008:15). In the case of the Metropolitan Museum Pacific display, the exhibition follows a double tradition: ethnographic objects are aestheticised, which creates timelessness, and the display follows a geographic and cultural lay-out (see above). The Rockefeller Wing thus reaffirms the encyclopaedic programme of the Metropolitan Museum of Art that aims to gather all the information available at a given moment in time, but it is not self-reflective, nor does it question, provoke or push forward established ideas and boundaries.

Schaeffer argues that it is often assumed that, when exhibiting art objects, one is stressing the perceptible 'objectness', automatically leading to decontextualisation and defunctionalisation (2004:33–34). By extension, exhibiting artefacts would then automatically place the objects in their context and re-attribute their function to them. It is clear that an anthropology museum, even when dealing with art, must contextualise, while an art museum, even when giving a great deal of attention to the objects' context through the labels, emphasises the aesthetic aspects.

Because each object is art a n d artefact, institutions privileging one over the other will obviously feel a tension. As a result, contemporary exhibition projects, displaying for instance Pacific art/artefacts, whether in art museums or anthropology museums, naturally look for innovative ways to challenge the histories and classifications of their host institutions. However, as real 'way-finders' (Dening 2004:167), museums rely on their previous institutional history to pilot their present-day activities, exhibitions and challenges, though without ever having the certainty that the system they are developing and applying has a life of its own outside themselves.

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